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19 Years After

Last week Nicaragua charged, with supporting evidence, that persons in the US embassy in Managua had tried to engineer the poisoning of Miguel d'Escoto, Sandinista foreign minister. In the Vietnam era this was called counter-terror—the effort to achieve by assassination what could not be brought about by other means. The US responded by expelling 21 Nicaraguan diplomats and closing six consulates. Many journalists I have spoken to think the Nicaraguan charges have a ring of truth. No newspaper has followed up. The network talk shows are replete with discussions of the morality of overthrowing foreign governments. Their usual answer: it is moral if the US is trying to overthrow Nicaragua. It is immoral if Nicaragua is trying to overthrow the US.

Watergate, the CIA scandals, the poisoned dart... all are now forgotten, as the Reagan administration makes overt what was once covert, saying and doing dirty things in front of the children.

On June 18, 1954, 19 years ago next Saturday, the CIA/United Fruit coup overthrew the democratically elected Arbenz government in Guatemala. Arbenz's land reforms were intolerable to Eisenhower and his business friends. In this paradigmatic US coup, the CIA's creature, Castillo Armas, inaugurated a tradition of assassination and super-exploitation and torture, culminating in literal genocide under Guatemala's present leader Rios Montt. Nothing worse was ever perpetrated in Uganda under Amin or the African Central Empire under Bokassa than in Guatemala over the last 10 years. Repression has reached a level of bestiality there which sickens any normal human being with the inclination to study the evidence.

This regime has the extremely benign tolerance of the Reagan administration and the enthusiastic military support of Israel. It is the living, foul advertisement of the consequences of US subversion. At 7 pm on Saturday, June 18, Stephen Schlesinger, co-author of *Bitter Fruit* (the excellent account of Arbenz's overthrow), will join speakers from Chile, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, 229 West 14th St. in remembrance of the counter-revolution of 1954. Obis Ben's film *Americas in Transition* will be shown. The memoriam is sponsored by the Committee in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala, 242-3342.